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## Context of 'June 1-2, 2001: Military Conducts Exercises Based on Scenario in which Cruise Missiles Are Launched against US'

This is a scalable context timeline. It contains events related to the event **June 1-2, 2001: Military Conducts Exercises Based on Scenario in which Cruise Missiles Are Launched against US**. You can narrow or broaden the context of this timeline by adjusting the zoom level. The lower the scale, the more relevant the items on average will be, while the higher the scale, the less relevant the items, on average, will be.

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### June 1-2, 2001: Military Conducts Exercises Based on Scenario in which Cruise Missiles Are Launched against US



The US military conducts Amalgam Virgo 01, a multi-agency live-fly homeland security exercise sponsored by the North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD) and involving the hypothetical scenario of a cruise missile being launched by "a rogue [government] or somebody" from a barge off the East Coast. Osama bin Laden is pictured on the cover of the proposal for the exercise. [AMERICAN FORCES PRESS SERVICE, 6/4/2002; ARKIN, 2005, PP. 253; GLOBALSECURITY (.ORG), 4/27/2005]



Osama bin Laden is pictured on the cover of the Amalgam Virgo exercise. [Source: NORAD]

The exercise takes place at Tyndall Air Force Base in Florida. Drones simulating cruise missiles are launched from Tyndall, head out to sea, circle a ship as if they are being launched from there, and then head back to land. Air Force F-16s, Navy gunners, and Army missile defense units attempt to find and track the drones. The Coast Guard attempts to catch the ship serving as the dummy launch site. [TAMPA TRIBUNE, 6/3/2001] Another scenario in the exercise involves a suicide mission in which a Haitian man with AIDS attempts to deliberately crash a small private plane into NORAD's Southeast Air Defense Sector (SEADS) at Tyndall AFB. [US AIR FORCE, 2001] The next Amalgam Virgo exercise, scheduled to take place in 2002, will involve two simultaneous commercial aircraft hijackings. Planning for that exercise will begin in July 2001 (see July 2001). [AMERICAN FORCES PRESS SERVICE, 6/4/2002; USA TODAY, 4/18/2004]

**Entity Tags:** US Department of Defense, Amalgam Virgo, North American Aerospace Defense Command

**Timeline Tags:** Complete 911 Timeline, 9/11 Timeline

### July 2001: NORAD Plans a Mock Simultaneous Hijacking Threat from inside the US



NORAD is already planning for the Amalgam Virgo 02 exercise. This exercise, scheduled for June 2002, will involve the simulation of two simultaneous

commercial aircraft hijackings. One plane, a Delta 757, flown by Delta pilots, will fly from Salt Lake City, Utah, to Elmendorf Air Force Base in Anchorage, Alaska. It will be “hijacked” by FBI agents posing as terrorists. The other plane will be a Navy C-9 bound from Oak Harbor, Washington, to Vancouver, British Columbia, and will be “hijacked” by Royal Canadian Mounted Police. On both planes, military personnel will act as civilian passengers. US and Canadian fighters are to respond, and either force the planes to land or simulate shooting them down. Describing Amalgam Virgo 02 to the 9/11 Commission, NORAD’s Major General Craig McKinley later says, “Threats of killing hostages or crashing were left to the script writers to invoke creativity and broaden the required response for players.” About 1,500 people will participate in the exercise. USA Today will note that this is an exception to NORAD’s claim that, prior to 9/11, it focused only on external threats to the US and did not consider the possibility of threats arising from within the US. 9/11 Commissioner Richard Ben-Veniste will similarly comment that this planned exercise shows that, despite frequent comments to the contrary, the military considered simultaneous hijackings before 9/11. [CNN, 6/4/2002; AMERICAN FORCES PRESS SERVICE, 6/4/2002; ASSOCIATED PRESS, 6/5/2002; 9/11 COMMISSION, 5/23/2003; USA TODAY, 4/18/2004]

**Entity Tags:** Craig McKinley, North American Aerospace Defense Command, Richard Ben-Veniste, Amalgam Virgo

**Timeline Tags:** Complete 911 Timeline, 9/11 Timeline

### **Before September 11, 2001: US Government Prepares for Hijackings, Some of Them Involving Multiple Planes**



Based on interviews with FBI officials, the New Yorker will report that, for several years prior to 9/11, the US government plans for “simulated terrorist attacks, including scenarios [involving] multiple-plane hijackings.” This presumably refers to more than just the Amalgam Virgo 02 exercise (see July 2001), which is based on the scenario of two planes being simultaneously hijacked. [NEW YORKER, 9/24/2001] Similarly, NORAD will state that before 9/11, it normally conducts four major exercises each year at headquarters level. Most of them include a hijack scenario, and some of them are apparently quite similar to the 9/11 attacks (see Between 1991 and 2001 and Between September 1999 and September 10, 2001). [USA TODAY, 4/18/2004; CNN, 4/19/2004] According to author Lynn Spencer, before September 11, “To prepare for their missions in support of NORAD, the Air National Guard pilots—some of the finest pilots in the world—often use hijacking scenarios to train for intercept tactics.” [SPENCER, 2008, PP. 84-85] John Arquilla, an associate professor of defense analysis at the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, California, later says that while “No one knew specifically that 20 people would hijack four airliners and use them for suicide attacks against major buildings... the idea of such an attack was well known, [and] had been war gamed as a possibility in exercises before Sept. 11.” [MONTEREY COUNTY HERALD, 7/18/2002]

**Entity Tags:** North American Aerospace Defense Command, United States, Air National Guard, John Arquilla

**Timeline Tags:** Complete 911 Timeline, 9/11 Timeline

### **September 12, 2001: Air Force Utilizes New Radar Command Center; Device Overcomes Vulnerabilities Seen on 9/11**



The US Air Force turns to a new type of device to improve NORAD’s air surveillance capabilities for the East Coast. The new system, called the Joint Based Expeditionary Connectivity Center, or JBECC, is a sophisticated mobile radar command center. It is housed inside a Humvee. Once the vehicle is parked, a tent can be expanded to allow additional screens and communication equipment to be laid out and used. Brown International, the Alabama-based company behind it, received an urgent call from an Air Force commander on the evening of 9/11, requesting the new system. A cargo plane was sent to pick it up immediately.

[ASSOCIATED PRESS, 11/29/2004] On September 12, the JBECC prototype is deployed to Naval Air Station Oceana in Virginia. It links the CONR (NORAD’s Continental US Region) Air Operations Center into AWACS and other East Coast radars. [FILSON,



A JBECC unit. [Source: Air Force]

2003, PP. 143] The principal innovation of the JBECC is that it allows the merging of military and civilian radar data on one screen. Now, the military can see civilian radar returns and transponder information without having to call the FAA. Reportedly, during the 9/11 attacks, the military's inability to see the FAA's data hampered its response to the hijackings. Terry Beane, the president of Brown International, will later explain: "A military radar will see there is something there but doesn't know what it is. On 9/11, they were having to literally talk on the phone

to each other. The problem was they didn't know which planes were OK and which ones weren't because they didn't have all that integrated." [ASSOCIATED PRESS, 11/29/2004] The JBECC is also superior at tracking low-level aircraft like cruise missiles, something that has always been difficult for ground-based radar because of the earth's curvature. It was successfully tested prior to 9/11 during the Amalgam Virgo 01 air defense exercise in June 2001 (see June 1-2, 2001). [JANE'S DEFENSE WEEKLY, 5/4/2001; GLOBALSECURITY (.ORG), 4/27/2005] The JBECC will later be deployed during important national security events such as the Salt Lake City Winter Olympics and the 2004 G8 summit in Sea Island, Georgia. [ASSOCIATED PRESS, 11/29/2004]

**Entity Tags:** Brown International, Joint-Based Expeditionary Connectivity Center, North American Aerospace Defense Command, US Department of the Air Force, Federal Aviation Administration

**Timeline Tags:** Complete 911 Timeline

## September 25, 2001: Missile Defense Requires a 'Single Integrated Picture,' Study Says



The US military must develop a single integrated picture (SIP) to meet the emerging threat of cruise missile proliferation, says a study directed by Stephen R. Woodall, a defense expert with the National Defense Industrial Association (NDIA), a defense industry lobby group. [WOODALL, 9/25/2001] A SIP would be a graphic representation of the airspace around a battle zone that would detect and track all airborne objects, discriminating friend from foe. At the moment, the different branches of the military cannot share a common picture of the battlefield in real time. The US is especially vulnerable to low-flying cruise missiles because they are difficult to detect and intercept. The Defense Department created a SIP program three years ago headed by Navy Captain Jeffery W. Wilson to improve the integration between disparate data collection and tracking systems used by the different services, but making them work together is still a distant goal. Says Stephen Woodall: "A SIP would improve homeland defense. 'You need a SIP around the United States.' NORAD can see every airplane in the sky and every satellite in space, but that is 'not good enough for cruise missile defense.'" A cruise missile attack was part of a recent military exercise named Amalgam Virgo '01 (see June 1-2, 2001). According to Woodall, "The conclusion of [Amalgam Virgo] was that 'we are naked. We have no capability to deal with that kind of problem.'" [NATIONAL DEFENSE, 11/2001; NATIONAL DEFENSE, 12/2001; NATIONAL DEFENSE, 9/2002] The deployment of a new mobile radar command center immediately after the 9/11 attacks also underscores the need for further advances in this field (September 12, 2001).

**Entity Tags:** National Defense Industrial Association, Stephen R. Woodall, Jeffery W. Wilson, US Department of Defense

**Timeline Tags:** US Military

#### 4:30 p.m., June 9, 2004: Capitol Evacuated as Unidentified Aircraft Nears; Plane Carrying Governor Almost Shot Down



For a few tense minutes, an unidentified plane flying inside Washington's no-fly zone comes close to being shot down by the military. The plane, a Beechcraft King Air, is carrying Governor Ernie Fletcher (R-KY), who is coming to attend the funeral of former president Ronald Reagan. The plane's transponder is broken, but the pilot notified the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) of the problem earlier in the flight. However, the FAA failed to inform the military, which was therefore unable to identify the plane. In addition to the lack of transponder identification, the plane is flying deep inside the no-fly zone around the White House. The Capitol is evacuated at around 4:30 p.m., when thousands are awaiting the arrival of President Reagan's coffin. An F-16 is scrambled to identify the plane but is unable to do so because of cloud cover. NORAD's commander, General Ralph Eberhart, is asked if the plane should be shot down. Fortunately, the pilot turns toward National Airport at this time, ending the crisis. [COURIER-JOURNAL (LOUISVILLE, KY), 7/4/2004; USA TODAY, 7/4/2004; WASHINGTON POST, 7/8/2004] A new mobile radar command post, called the Joint-Based Expeditionary Connectivity Center (JBECC), which merges civil and military radar data and which was deployed in the Washington area immediately after 9/11 (see September 12, 2001), is used by the military to identify the plane and avoid a shoot-down. [ASSOCIATED PRESS, 11/29/2004]

**Entity Tags:** Federal Aviation Administration, Joint-Based Expeditionary Connectivity Center, Ernie Fletcher, Ralph Eberhart

**Timeline Tags:** Complete 911 Timeline